



The Plan for How We Live & Grow

Phase 2 - Who Are We? Existing Conditions Report

General Introduction

The basis for making informed decisions regarding a community's future growth and development requires first an understanding of what elements define the community – in other words what are the community's existing conditions. The following pages will provide an explanation of what makes Columbia the city that it is.

This chapter is organized around the seven theme areas that make-up Columbia Imagined. These seven themes are as follows:

1. Land Use and Growth Management
2. Environmental Management
3. Infrastructure
4. Mobility, Connectivity and Accessibility
5. Economic Development
6. Inter-Governmental Cooperation
7. Livable and Sustainable Communities

These themes are the result of a reorganization of the 12 topic areas listed in the City Council enabling resolution (Resolution # _____) that authorized the comprehensive plan and the creation of the Comprehensive Plan Task Force. During its work on the plan, a subcommittee of the task force reviewed representative plans in other cities. It found that broad themes were superior to the traditional listing of topics like land use, transportation, housing, etc. The twelve topic areas are not disappearing from the plan, however; they are represented within the seven themes.

The seven themes overlap. This is intentional. In preparing the plan there has been an effort to avoid the "pigeon-holing" of topics. Instead the plan tries to balance relationships between and among topics with the topics themselves. Transportation – traditionally a mainstay of comprehensive plans – is described primarily in Mobility, Connectivity and Accessibility and it has relevance to all other themes. Street designs can contribute to the livability of cities; the quality and availability of transportation improvements and services is fundamental to economic development; construction of transportation improvements and mode choices have varying environmental impacts; roads, sidewalks, bike routes, buses, airports and rail are community infrastructure; transportation planning is necessarily an exercise in inter-governmental cooperation; and land use and growth management is inseparable from the capacity, timing, and quality of transportation infrastructure.

As one moves from theme area to theme area throughout this chapter the overlap noted above will become readily apparent. This chapter lays the foundation upon which subsequent chapters dealing with goals and objectives, projections and policies, and implementation strategies are built upon.

While the contents of this chapter are significant in their breadth it is not possible to capture every finite existing condition that defines Columbia. As such, this existing conditions analysis captures those elements that are most representative of Columbia and makes every effort to incorporate the comments received during public input forums relating to the theme areas.

Land Use and Growth Management

Columbia is unique in several respects. It is a single-city metropolitan area. No other city in Missouri or in the surrounding region, above 50,000 in population, is without one or more contiguous incorporated municipalities. The City of Columbia is the choice for persons desiring to live in the Columbia metro and desiring city services. This in part explains its diversity. Columbia is also growing at a rate that exceeds growth in its surrounding countryside, despite recent trends nationwide toward decentralization, suburbanization, and preferences for “open country living.”

The City also takes on more functions than is typical of municipalities: It offers the usual menu of street maintenance, police and fire protection, code enforcement, parks and recreation, and revenue collections services, plus a municipal electric utility, city-owned airport and railroad short line, a public-private economic development office, combined city-county health and community services and public safety communications-emergency management agencies, and a cultural affairs department that includes a public art program. This is not to suggest that Columbia is a seamless island of uniform city services. It relies on water districts to provide water to some areas; the Boone County Regional Sewer District to provide waste water collection to places city sewers cannot reach; a separate electric utility provides some of the power distribution in the city, and some would argue that tiny governmental units called transportation development districts (TDDs) have taken up some of the slack in providing needed transportation infrastructure.

The City has always grown at a moderate pace; there is not a decade that Columbia has not grown and scarcely a year in the recent century that its annual growth rate has been more than a single digit. This persistent and moderate growth, combined with the relative stability of education, government, and other service-based (health care, insurance) employment, has contributed to a feeling that Columbia is unique. Yet the just-released citizen survey includes the finding that only 37 percent of Columbian surveyed are satisfied with “planning for growth” and 34 percent of the total are dissatisfied – the highest dissatisfaction rate among six categories measuring perceptions citizens have of the city.¹

With these ratings of satisfaction regarding planning for growth one may ask “what is Columbia’s land use and growth management strategy today?”. The following general categories hope to explain how we have gotten to where we are.

Land Use Planning

The era of land use regulation and comprehensive planning in Columbia began in 1935. On May 6, the City Council adopted the City’s first zoning ordinance. This historic event was followed shortly by the adoption of the City’s first comprehensive plan entitled “A City Plan for Columbia, Missouri” on July 1. This plan was prepared by city planners Hare & Hare of Kansas City.

In the years that have followed, revisions to the 1935 City Plan and original zoning ordinance have been made. New land use plans were adopted in 1957, 1983, and 2001. The City’s zoning ordinance

¹ The other five “perception” categories: quality of services provided by the city (80% satisfied); overall quality of life in the city (78%), overall feeling of safety in the city (64%); overall value received for City tax dollars (57%); and the direction the city is heading (51%). “Satisfied” means the respondent answered “very satisfied” or “satisfied” in their response.

1 was completely revised and readopted in 1964. The City also adopted subdivision regulations in
2 1964. Numerous other plans have been produced in the intervening years to address an array of
3 issues.

4
5 These plans were often produced to meet neighborhood or community needs and covered a wide
6 range of topics. Examples of plans produced include the urban revitalization plans of the 1960's,
7 special area/corridor plans of the 1980's, and more comprehensive areas plans of the early 2000's for
8 northeast and east Columbia. Land use planning is not new to the City or its residents. Land use
9 planning is part of the fabric and history of Columbia.

10
11 In February 2001, the City adopted its most current comprehensive plan Metro 2020. This plan has
12 provided general guidance for development decisions that have occur over the last decade. Unlike
13 conventional land use plans, which offer detailed guidance for future growth and land use areas,
14 Metro 2020 provides policies and principles intended to ensure land use compatibility while
15 encouraging integration of complementary uses.ⁱ

16
17 The principle element of the Metro 2020 plan is its land use map (see Map 2-~~X~~). Most land use
18 decisions made during the past decade were consistent with this map and the objectives of the plan,
19 however; it was recommended during the Imagine Columbia's Future visioning process that Metro
20 2020 be replaced with a new and more modern comprehensive plan. Concern had been expressed
21 that the plan did not adequately involve the public nor include emerging zoning trends that may help
22 position the City for future sustainable and desired growth.

23
24 In January 2010, the process of developing the City's new comprehensive plan was begun. Columbia
25 Imagined, upon adoption, will become the City's new comprehensive plan. It will look at providing
26 development guidance for a period of approximately 20 years or to approximately the year 2030.

27
28 Columbia Imagined will differ from Metro 2020 in its content. Metro 2020 was primarily concerned
29 with land use related issues and compatibility whereas Columbia Imagined will attempt to look
30 holistically at the impacts that land use change has on the City. Columbia Imagined will attempt to
31 blend traditional land use planning elements such as transportation, economic development, and
32 infrastructure with newer more social/societal issues such as environmental protection/preservation
33 and livability.

34
35 Completion of Columbia Imagined won't mean that comprehensive planning will end in Columbia. As
36 can be seen, there is a history of producing plans for the community. Columbia Imagined not unlike
37 its predecessor plans is a "living document" and will need amendment over time to remain relevant
38 and offer decision-making guidance to elected and appointed officials. The process of amendment
39 and how the public is involved in the process will be covered in greater detail in Chapter 6
40 (Implementation).

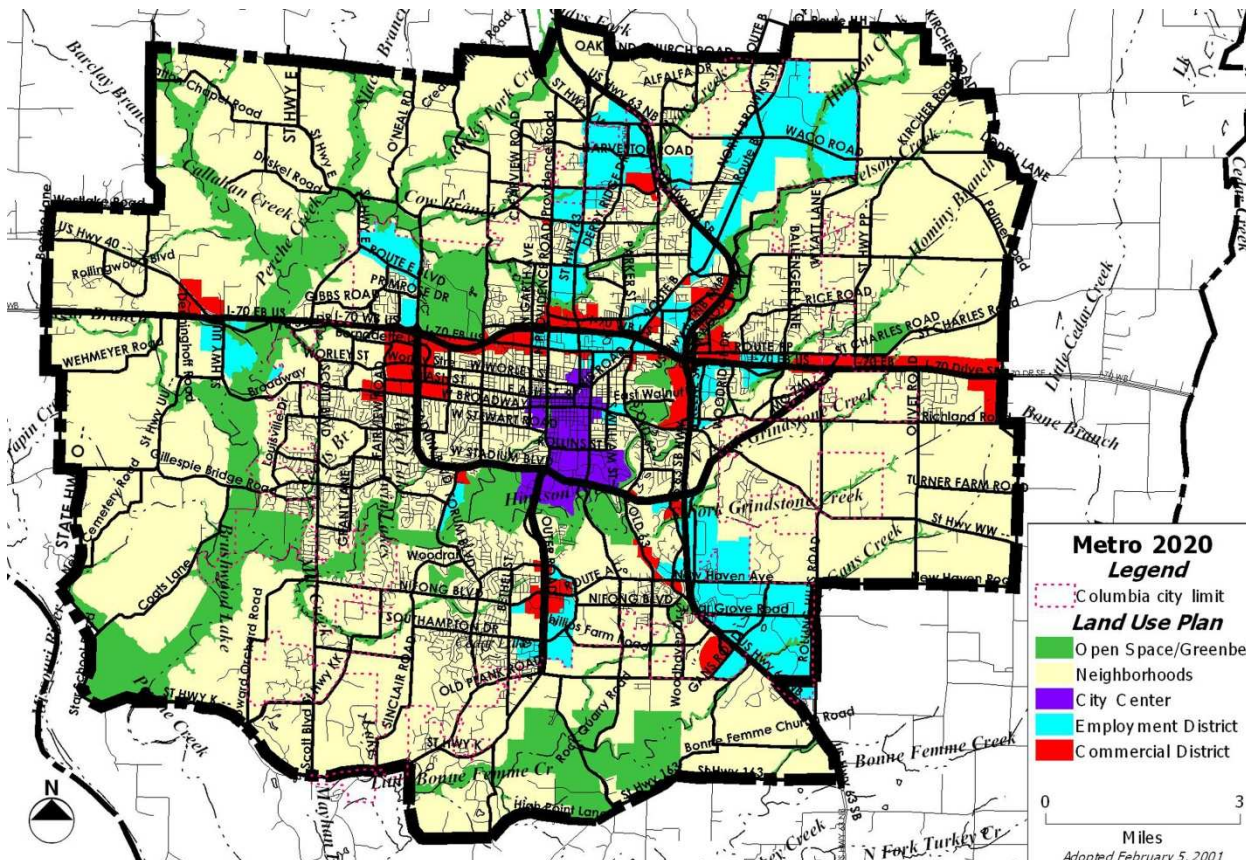


Figure 2-1 (Metro 2020 Map) – Appendix

Annexation History

The City's current land area is 63.125 square miles. This is approximately the same size as the City of St. Louis and is equivalent to a circle approximately nine miles in diameter. Columbia has no other incorporated cities to block its expansion in any direction. If it expands just one mile in all directions, the area of the "circle" increases by 50 percent to 95 square miles.

The Figure 2-X shows the progression of annexation since 1826. During the previous 10 years the City has increased its territory through voluntary annexation by almost eight square miles. 1969 was the largest City expansion in which just over 12,000 acres (18.75 square miles) of land was brought into the City.

Current City policy requires land to become part of the City (annexed) or be subject to an annexation agreement prior to it being provided with city sewer service connection. This has often led to a jagged city boundary in many locations and questions being asked if such a policy actually furthers or hinders the ability to have a "contiguous and compact" boundary as was intended by the State enabling statute. A copy the existing annexation policy (PR -97) can be found in the appendix.

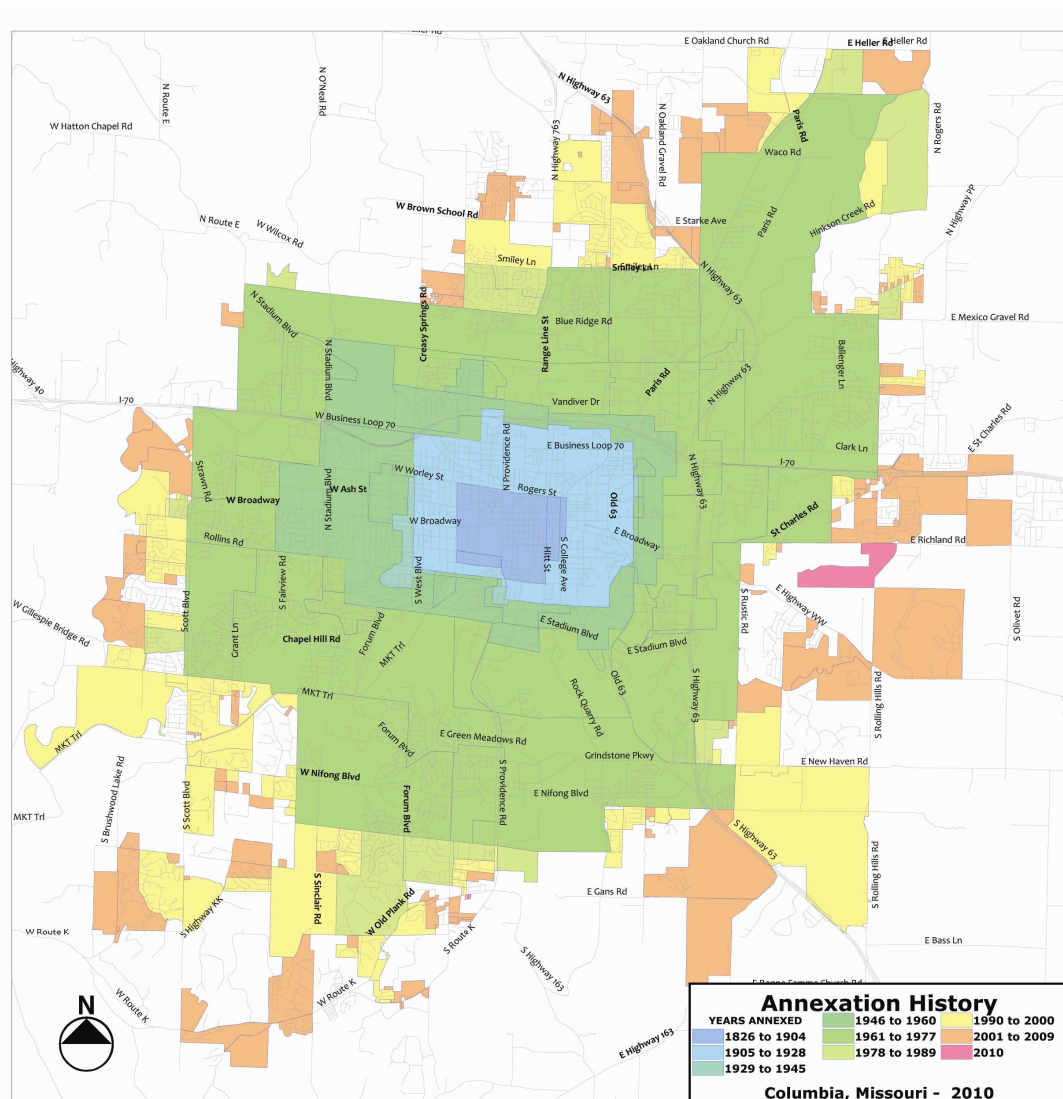


Figure 2-2

Public comments received during the forum sessions revealed that those in attendance felt that the city was growing too rapidly on the fringe and that sprawl was a concern. A desire was expressed that development be more concentrated and potentially focused to those areas of the city that were vacant or derelict. Additionally, issues surrounding adequate cost recovery for utility infrastructure expansion were raised during the public forums. The general sentiment of the public was that expansion of infrastructure ahead of a true need was a cost that should be borne by those demanding the services.

In 2010, the City Manager created a taskforce to review and make recommendations on infrastructure cost allocation. The Infrastructure Task Force (ITF) has completed its initial review of possible options for cost allocation and will complete its full assignment shortly or concurrently with the completion of Columbia Imagined. The delay in the ITF completing its assignment is because the future infrastructure needs of the City will be better understood once the desired pattern and density of growth have been established. Additional information on the ITF, its members, and documents it produced to date is available at ([link](#)).

Land Use Pattern

The City of Columbia was incorporated in 1826 and primarily consisted of a grid-style street system with a fully integrated land use pattern. In 1935 the City adopted its first land use map that delineated specific areas for different types of land uses. The idea of an integrated mixture of uses within neighborhoods soon began to transition to one of segregation. Today, the City would generally be described as suburban in character with a defined central city and isolated commercial, office, and industrial areas often only accessible by vehicle.

This transition accelerated with the introduction of the automobile, increased personal wealth, and the desire to flee the central city to escape over-crowded conditions, crime, and other undesirable elements. Until recently this pattern of segregation has remained constant; however, with the changing economic realities efforts to integrate land uses and to increase density are becoming more popular.

In 1935, the City's land use map had only seven zoning classifications. The 2012 Zoning Ordinance includes a total of 23 different zoning classifications. Table 2-1 provides the number of acres each of these 23 zoning classification occupies within the City.

This diversity in zoning classes has resulted in most residential neighborhoods becoming homogenous in density and use type, but does little to promote the integration of neighborhood commercial services within easy reach of a Columbian without having to get into a vehicle. The low residential development densities seen within the community are not able to support integrated commercial uses such as a traditional neighborhood corner stores.

During the Columbia Imagined public forums many in attendance commented on the impersonal feeling that many neighborhoods project and how establishing "community" within these neighborhoods is an important aspect of creating a sense of place. The Zoning Ordinance may be seen as a possibly contributor to the loss of "community" since it imposes greater requirements to separate houses from each other and the roads (setbacks) as well as established minimum lot area requirements for particular uses to ensure adequate public health and safety.

The City's land use pattern is not only influenced by the adopted zoning ordinance, but it is also influenced by our roadway and utility corridors, utility service areas, and other environmental factors. The construction, availability, and placement of these features all influence the pattern of development within and around Columbia.

As an example of how roadways influence land use patterns one has to look no further than what happened along the Old Nifong Boulevard corridor when Grindstone Parkway was constructed. Upon completion of the new road commercial development replaced the prior agricultural and low density residential uses. As an example of how utility placement influences land use one can look to east Columbia at the Old Hawthorne development. Had it not been for the installation of the South Fork of the Grindstone sanitary sewer line the housing and golf course would likely not be there today.

Table 2- 1 - Acres by Zoning District¹

Zoning District	Acres
A-1	8277.41
R-1	14530.29
R-2	1437.60
R-3	2175.32
R-4	85.07
PUD (all types)	2113.36
RMH	238.22
C-1	428.20
C-2	144.97
C-3	1361.59
C-P	1408.30
O-1	569.68
O-2	3.57
O-P	410.52
M-1	1577.99
M-C	1110.74
M-P	71.34
M-R	73.89
F-1 (overlay)	4219.82
H-P (overlay)	7.02
M-U (overlay)	169.37
S-R (overlay)	142.72
U-C (overlay)	384.99
Total	40,942

Source: City of Columbia Public Work Department

1: Acreage as of August 10, 2012

Simply put, our land use pattern is influenced in multiple ways. While land use regulation through the zoning ordinance is seen as the primary means by which to segregate uses to reduce incompatibility (or the perception thereof) it is really how we construct and provide infrastructure to the undeveloped areas within and around Columbia that will define our future pattern of development.

If no infrastructure is extended to undeveloped lands there will be limited opportunity to develop such areas economically and in a manner supportive of public demands. Chapter 5 of this plan will explore potential growth options for the City's future and endeavor to show the benefits and weaknesses of each. Additionally, this chapter will endeavor to allocate appropriately, based on available or likely planned infrastructure improvements, land uses needed to meet our future growth.

Recent Growth Areas

Significant infrastructure investments have been made in areas to the east of US 63 in recent years to support future growth in this part of the city. Sanitary sewer lines have been extended to reach developing industrial sites in the Gans, Grindstone, and Hinkson Creek watersheds.

Sites on Brown Station Road (northeast), Discovery Ridge Parkway (southeast), and Route Z (east) are either designated or pending state designation as “shovel ready” for future industrial development. Two new public schools were commissioned for construction (Alpha Hart Lewis Elementary on Waco Road, and Battle High School on St. Charles Road) in the northeast part of the city, with an additional elementary school pending approval. These projects are anticipated to stimulate growth primarily to the east of US 63.ⁱⁱ

Targeting areas for higher density

The Downtown Leadership Council has recommended an expanded downtown concept that promotes urban neighborhoods in the area from Business Loop 70 to the University Campus, and Garth Avenue to Old Highway 63. Both the Sasaki and H3 downtown studies recommend pockets of high density in the downtown area.ⁱⁱⁱ

The A. Perry Philips Lake area, with proximity to an under-used interchange, city regional parks, the Discovery Ridge University Research Park, could be a high-density enclave. Metro 2020 designates this interchange area both as a commercial and an employment center.

Keene Avenue, sometimes known as the medical district, is developing with large-profile medical and office uses. While the corridor has seen new development its transportation access has lacked to keep up with demands. To continue to facilitate this areas growth potential to meet the medical demands of Columbia’s future growth improvements to its transportation system needs to be evaluated and improved – especially the capacity of the US 63-Broadway interchange.

The Columbia Mall area has some infill capacity. An appropriate extension of Fairview Road north and completion of the Scott Boulevard extension to I-70 could improve traffic circulation to support higher densities. Malls around the country have changed their shape, style and to some degree their functions, which may be a possible direction long-term for the mall and its surrounding property.

The State Farm Campus has additional land where continued office park or an urban village concept could concentrate population, employment and services.

Growth Management

The land use pattern of Columbia has been shaped and influenced by the existing regulations, plans, infrastructure, and development trends of the recent past. However to ensure that many of the problems and issues that some have expressed throughout the public forum process do not continue to be perpetuated, a new approach toward managing and guiding the growth of the community is believed necessary. This technique is often referred to as “growth management”. In 2004, the

1 Planning and Zoning Commission and staff defined this term as “... *the application of a variety of*
2 *planning tools and techniques to deliberately guide the pattern of growth, including the location, type*
3 *and character of development.*”
4

5 Typical Techniques

6

7 Growth management plans often delineate planning areas into three broad categories:
8

- 9 • Existing urbanized – urban services and infrastructure available
- 10 • Future urban growth area – areas that may be served efficiently by services and infrastructure in
11 the event growth occurs. The future urban areas may also be tiered to schedule extension of
12 services by periods; and
- 13 • Rural area – growth limited to rural in nature and unincorporated by city.
14

15 Tools for Managing Growth

16

17 Conventional tools for growth management include plans, zoning regulations, and subdivision
18 regulations. Other tools for managing growth include public facility ordinances, financing of public
19 facilities, city-county agreements; sub-area plans; and land development monitoring systems
20 (collection of data on development as it progresses to provide feedback to the growth management
21 techniques).
22

23 Within the City of Columbia several examples of growth management planning exist. These examples
24 follow and generally fall into the most common tools for managing growth as noted above – plans,
25 zoning regulations, and subdivision regulations. While these essential building blocks exist, it is
26 anticipated that as an outgrowth of Columbia Imagined there will be new and more modern methods
27 for managing growth identified and proposed for potential adoption or at least more detailed study.
28

29 A primary tool to assist in growth management that has received significant discussion locally is the
30 use of form-based zoning. During the visioning process of Imagine Columbia’s Future the
31 Development Citizen Topic Group proposed as one of its strategies to “*educate the public about*
32 *growth management*” and “*implement a growth management plan that incorporates form-based*
33 *zoning.*”
34

35 The City has begun reviewing form-based codes as a possible alternative to its current conventional
36 zoning model. In essence, a form-based code focuses on form (building scale, arrangement,
37 relationship to the street) as being more important than land use management (code enforcement;
38 conditions on operations) and use classification (the thought being that uses adjust to form) whereas
39 traditional zoning reverses the importance of these elements.

40 The Downtown Columbia Leadership Council recently co-organized (with the Central Missouri
41 Development Council and Mid-Missouri American Institute of Architects) an educational forum on
42 form-based codes.^{iv}
43

44 As the land use strategies and policies of Columbia Imagined are further refined and publicly vetted
45 within Chapter 4, the potential to see the development of a form-based code for use within the City’s

1 land use regulatory structure is likely to emerge as an option. Such a regulatory tool may effectively
2 help to manage the City's future growth by directing it internally to specifically identified areas such
3 as downtown or nodal districts where infrastructure and redevelopment potential exist. This re-
4 direction of development potential has been a common theme heard throughout the public forums
5 that have been held. Residents have clearly expressed dissatisfaction with the status quo
6 development pattern and process and desire something new, more environmentally sound, and
7 economically sustainable. expressed that development
8

ⁱ http://www.gocolumbiamo.com/Planning/Documents/met-2020_proposed_final_draft.pdf

ⁱⁱ See the Northeast Columbia Area Plan

(http://www.gocolumbiamo.com/Planning/Documents/NECAP_approved1009.pdf) and East Area Plan

(http://www.gocolumbiamo.com/Planning/Documents/PublicHearingDraft-compiled_9-24-10_.pdf) long-range subarea
planning documents for additional information about predicted and recommended future land use.

ⁱⁱⁱ http://www.gocolumbiamo.com/Council/Commissions/DLC/documents/appendix_b_studymap.pdf

<http://gocolumbiamo.com/campus-cityopportunitystudy.php>

<http://www.gocolumbiamo.com/Council/Commissions/DLC/charrette.php>

^{iv} <http://www.gocolumbiamo.com/Council/Commissions/DLC/documents/ColumbiaFBCWorkshop-MMpresentation.pdf>
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